

Dick Henderson, 'Mr. Carbide,' dies State legislator,

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Dick Henderson, "Mr. Carbide" and three-term state legislator, died Monday night at Charleston Area Medical Center's Memorial Division.

Henderson, 72, had been ill for a few months.

"He was recognized as Mr. Carbide," said Thad Epps, an engineer who became Union Carbide Corp.'s regional spokesman and lobbyist. "He epitomized an era when the corporation and its employees were very much bonded together. Carbide was a family." Before his retirement from Carbide in January 1993, Henderson edited the Carbider, the company's 15,000-circulation newsletter for employees and retirees, for 41 years.

First elected to the House of Delegates in 1992, Henderson quickly aligned with three other Republican legislators from the 32nd District - Jay Nesbitt, Ron Walters and Steve Harrison.

They were called the "Four Horsemen" and were re-elected in 1994.

Rusty Webb replaced Nesbitt in 1996, when the other three were elected to a third consecutive term.

Henderson was running for the seat again this year.

Gov. Cecil Underwood said he was a dedicated delegate who gained perspective on development from his years at Carbide.

Also, Underwood said Henderson, a Roman Catholic, possessed a "unique style of communication" and enlivened the recent Legislative Prayer Breakfast.

"He suggested the Methodists should get a better hymnal," Underwood said.

Webb, R-Kanawha, said losing Henderson was like losing a brother.

"We were like a family," Webb said. "Two generations separated us, but if you knew Dick, you knew he was as vibrant as any 30-year-old." For Webb, Henderson was a mentor, someone who showed him the ropes both during the campaign in 1996 and in the House of Delegates.

Webb praised Henderson's sense of humor as well as his commitment to conservative principles.

"His humor and his commitment to his ideas, you just don't find that," Webb said. "Everyone goes down there and compromises. He didn't. I would call him the soul and spirit of the Four Horsemen. He did exactly what he felt was right, and he wouldn't compromise." Nesbitt called Henderson a gentleman and a good man.

"I've never met anybody who didn't like Dick," Nesbitt said.

But most of all, Nesbitt said he will remember Henderson as a man who loved.

"He loved his country - he was very passionate about his country, his church, his job, and most of all his family," Nesbitt said.

Senate Finance Chairman Oshel Craigo said he first got to know Henderson years ago, when the senator

ran a business in Henderson's stomping ground of St. Albans.

"**Dick Henderson** was always a prominent, well-liked figure in and around St. Albans," the Putnam County Democrat recalled. "He was always giving something back to the community of St. Albans." Craigo said Henderson will be remembered for being outgoing, with a great sense of humor.

"He was always a class guy," he said.

Sometimes flamboyant and always friendly, Henderson could perform antics to draw attention to his causes, such as his commitment to smaller government, lower taxes, less gambling and his opposition to the death penalty.

He disdained a bill to increase the maximum wager for video lottery from \$2 to \$10 and allow \$100 bills to be inserted.

"I call it the ding-dong bill," he said in a speech on the House floor. "I call it the lose-your-money-a-heck-of-a-lot-faster bill." He ended his comments by pulling out a can of air freshener and spraying a copy of the bill.

"It still smells bad," he said.

Harrison, who sat next to Henderson in the House for six years, said Henderson's sense of humor always made a point.

Once Henderson came up with the idea to have members cut their ties off to symbolize cutting taxes.

"One bill he didn't like, he chewed a piece of the bill," Harrison said. "He came back the next year and had a bill shredded up into zucchini bread and served it to people." In a 1992 Daily Mail interview about baldness, Henderson again exhibited his sense of humor.

"It's a symbol I wear with pride," Henderson said of his shiny head.

"If that's the worst thing that happens to me, then I'm in good shape." Henderson grew up in northern Michigan, learned photography in the Navy and then studied photojournalism at the University of Houston.

He worked for the Houston Chronicle and the Houston Post before signing on with Union Carbide at the Texas City plant.

In 1964, he transferred to the Kanawha Valley and settled in St. Albans. He and his wife, Lorraine, have raised nine children.

Epps said he will be missed.

"He was a great guy." Funeral arrangements for Henderson were incomplete today.

Karin Fischer and Stacey Ruckle contributed to this story.